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FLOOR DEBATE

March 25, 2002 LB 178, 970

LB 178.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: The bill advances. I raise the call.
LB 970. Senator Erdman, or, excuse me, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 970, a bill by Senator Dwite Pedersen.
(Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 10 of this
year; referred to Urban Affairs; advanced to General File. I
have no amendments to the bill at this time, Mr. President.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Dwite Pedersen, you're recognized
to open.

SENATOR Dw. PEDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the
Legislature. At the present time, state law provides that a
second-class city, which becomes a first-class city upon
reaching a population of 5,000 residents, must within six years
of the transition change from three voting wards to four.
LB 970 deletes the statutory requirement to switch to four wards
and makes the decision as to whether to change to four voting
wards or to remain with three wards, a local option rather than
a state mandate. It is my understanding that at the present
time the city of Elkhorn and the city of Crete are within the
six-year window prior to having to transition to four wards.
The city of Schuyler is in the process of transitioning to a
first-class city so this will apply to them in the near future.
The bill was heard by the Urban Affairs Committee on January 22.
There was no opposition to the bill and it was forwarded to the
full Legislature with no dissenting votes. The city of Elkhorn,
in my district, will approach the six-year deadline in August of
this year. Without this change, Elkhorn, Crete, and Schuyler
will be forced to change from three voting wards to four. No
one is having problems with the inadequate representation or any
other local problems that would be remedied by going to four
wards. If any problems do arise, the law as amended by LB 970,
will allow the city council to make that decision as it does not
prohibit a city from going to four wards. I would hope that you
would vote for this and pass it on to Select File, and I would
give the remainder of my opening to Senator Chambers.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Debate on the advancement, Senator